



Cathedral Eucharist



Sunday After Ascension Day

**Farewell to
Dean John Witcombe**

17th May 2026, 10.30am

Welcome to Coventry Cathedral

Welcome to Coventry Cathedral as we gather for this Eucharist, in which The Very Reverend John Witcombe, Dean of Coventry, presides and preaches for the final time as Dean, marking the close of thirteen years of ministry among us. The Reverend Kate Massey, Canon for Arts and Reconciliation, deacon, and the Reverend Nitano Muller, Canon for Worship and Welcome, sub-deacon.

Over more than a decade, John's leadership has helped shape and reimagine this Cathedral as a place that is both deeply rooted and courageously open, a living and breathing community of prayer, hospitality and encounter. Through his vision, creativity and deep commitment to the gospel, this place has continued to grow as a Cathedral that welcomes generously, creating space for all who enter here to be held, challenged, inspired and transformed.

John has nurtured and strengthened our Cathedral's vocation as a place where worship is offered with imagination and depth, where liturgy and music draw us more fully into the mystery of God, and where ancient faith is expressed with freshness and integrity for the world we inhabit today.

His ministry has also deepened our identity as a Cathedral shaped by reconciliation, renewing our commitment to peace-making, justice and the healing of wounds, both close to home and across the world.

As we gather for this final Eucharist in John's ministry as Dean, we do so with profound gratitude for all that has been shared, created and made possible in these years, and with prayer for John and Ricarda and for all that lies ahead. Above all, we gather to worship God, from whom every good gift comes, and to whom all glory belongs.

Mass Setting is Schubert's Mass in G major, sung by the Boy Choristers, Lay Clerks and Chamber Choir. Directed by Joe Watson, Acting Director of Music. The organists are Liam Condon, Assistant Director of Music and Adam Heron, Organ Scholar.

The Gathering

Just before the service, the congregation is welcomed. The Peace Bell is rung and we STAND to sing the opening hymn.

Hymn

**Praise to the Lord,
the Almighty, the King of creation;
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and
salvation:
all ye who hear, now to his temple draw near,
joining in glad adoration.**

**Praise to the Lord,
who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
shieldeth thee gently from harm,
or when fainting sustaineth:
hast thou not seen how thy heart's wishes have been
granted in what he ordaineth?**

**Praise to the Lord,
who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend thee:
ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
if to the end he befriend thee.**

**Praise to the Lord!
O let all that is in me adore him!
All that hath life and breath,
come now with praises before him!
let the Amen sound from his people again:
gladly for ay we adore him.**

*Words by J. Neander (1650-1680)
translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878)
Tune CP 558 Lobe den Herren German 17th century melody*

We remain STANDING.

The Greeting

The Very Reverend John Witcombe, president, greets the people.

God has gone up with a shout,

The Lord with the sound of the trumpet!

Psalm 47:5

In the name of the Father,

And of the Son,

And of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Litany of Reconciliation

The Reverend Kate Massey, Canon for Arts and Reconciliation, deacon, leads the litany saying:

In penitence and hope, we now join our voices with those who have prayed these words before us, bringing before God the wounds of our world, the divisions within our communities, and the failures within our own hearts, as we commit ourselves again to the ministry of reconciliation entrusted to us all.

Silence is kept.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class,

Father, forgive.

The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own,

Father, forgive.

The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth.

Father, forgive.

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,

Father, forgive.

Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee,

Father, forgive.

The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children,
Father, forgive.

The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God,
Father, forgive.

The president says,

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgives you.

Amen.

Gloria in Excelsis

We remain STANDING as the choir sings:

Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra
pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
adoramus te, glorificamus te,
gratias agimus tibi propter
magnam gloriam tuam. Domine
Deus rex caelestis Deus Pater
omnipotens. Domine Fili
unigenite Jesu Christe.
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius
Patris, qui tollis peccata mundi
miserere nobis. Qui tollis
peccata mundi, suscipe
deprecationem nostram. Qui
sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis. Quoniam tu
solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus,
tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe
cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei
Patris.
Amen.

*Glory be to God on high, and in
earth peace, good will towards men.
We praise thee, we bless thee, we
worship thee, we glorify thee, we
give thanks to thee for thy great
glory, O Lord God, heavenly King,
God the Father Almighty. O Lord,
the only-begotten Son, Jesu Christ;
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of
the Father, that takest away the
sins of the world, have mercy upon
us. Thou that takest away the sins
of the world, have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of
the world, receive our prayer. Thou
that sittest at the right hand of God
the Father, have mercy upon us. For
thou only art holy; thou only art the
Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the
Holy Ghost, art most high in the
glory of God the Father. Amen.*

The Collect

The president leads us in praying the Collect of the day.

O God the King of glory,
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ
with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:
we beseech you, leave us not comfortless,
but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us
and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

The First Reading

We SIT to hear the first reading by Canon Margaret Sedgwick, Lay Canon and Reader Emeritus.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?’ ⁷He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ ⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’

¹ After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. ⁵So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

⁶ 'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

⁷Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

John 17:1-11

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

There follows a short organ improvisation as the procession returns and the Dean moves to the Pulpit.

Sermon

Once the Dean has prayed, we SIT.

After the sermon, the Dean returns to his seat on the chancel step and time is kept for reflection.

The Nicene Creed

The president invites everyone to STAND:

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.**

The Prayers of Intercession

The president says,

Let us pray to the Father who raised his Son to life
that we might live for ever in him.

Everyone SITS or KNEELS for the prayers of intercession.

Gracious God,
we give you thanks for your Church throughout the world,
for all who seek to proclaim the good news of Christ with courage,
humility and joy.

We pray for this Cathedral Church,
for all who worship here, serve, visit and find sanctuary here.
For those who have been formed in faith within these walls,
those whose lives have been changed through worship, music, prayer
and encounter,
and for all who will come after us.

Strengthen your Church to be a living sign of your kingdom:
open in welcome, rooted in prayer, generous in love,
and courageous in prophetic witness.

Jesus, Lord of life,
in your mercy, hear us.

God of peace and reconciliation,
we pray for our wounded and divided world.
For places marked by war and violence;
for communities fractured by injustice, prejudice and exclusion;
for all who labour for peace, healing and truth.

We pray especially for the ministry of reconciliation entrusted to this Cathedral,
that its witness may continue to speak hope into a hurting world.

Jesus, Lord of life,
in your mercy, hear us.

Loving God,
today we give thanks for all that has been offered, shared and nurtured
through years of faithful ministry in this place.
For vision and imagination,
wisdom and leadership,
courage and faithfulness in change,
prayers prayed and lives touched.

We commend to your care and blessing
John, as he prepares to lay down this ministry and begin a new chapter
of life.

Grant him rest
joy in all that has been accomplished,
peace in the letting go,
and fresh purpose in the days to come.

Bless also Ricarda,
giving thanks for her companionship, encouragement and support.
Surround their children and wider family with your love,
that together they may know deep joy and the gift of unhurried time
together.

May their new home be filled with laughter, peace and blessing.

Jesus, Lord of life,
in your mercy, hear us.

Compassionate God,
we pray for all who are burdened today:
those who are ill in body, mind or spirit,
those who grieve,
those facing uncertainty or loss,
and those whose hearts are heavy with worry or loneliness.

In a moment of quiet,
we name before you those known personally to us and those known
only to you.

A longer silence is kept.

Grant them healing, comfort and the assurance of your love and
presence with them always.

Jesus, Lord of life,
in your mercy, hear us.

Eternal God,
we remember before you those who have gone before us in faith,
Especially the members of this congregation who supported and
shaped John's ministry here,
giving thanks for their witness and example.
May we, with all your saints,
come at last to share in the fullness of your eternal kingdom.

Silence is kept.

Jesus, Lord of life,
in your mercy, hear us.

At the end, the president says,

Heavenly Father,
you have delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant that, as his death has recalled us to life,
so his continual presence in us may raise us to eternal joy;
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

**A Presentation to Dean John and Reverend Ricarda
by the Cathedral Churchwardens**

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

The Peace

We STAND and the president says,

God has made us one in Christ.

He has set his seal upon us and, as a pledge of what is to come,
has given the Spirit to dwell in our hearts. Alleluia.

cf 2 Corinthians 1:22

The deacon says,

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

We share a sign of peace with those around us.

Offertory Hymn

We remain STANDING to sing. During this hymn, the gifts of the people may be presented.

**I bind unto myself today
the strong name of the Trinity,
by invocation of the same,
the Three in One, and One in Three.**

**I bind unto myself today
the virtues of the star-lit heaven,
the glorious sun's life-giving ray,
the whiteness of the moon at even,
the flashing of the lightning free,
the whirling winds' tempestuous shocks,
the stable earth, the deep salt sea
around the old eternal rocks.**

**I bind unto myself today
the power of God to hold and lead,
his eye to watch, his might to stay,
his ear to hearken to my need;
the wisdom of my God to teach,
his hand to guide, his shield to ward,
the word of God to give me speech,
his heavenly host to be my guard.**

Choir Only

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

**I bind unto myself the name,
the strong name of the Trinity,
by invocation of the same,
the Three in One, and One in Three,
of whom all nature hath creation,
eternal Father, Spirit, Word.
Praise to the Lord of my salvation:
salvation is of Christ the Lord. Amen.**

*Words from St Patrick's Breastplate
5-7th century Gaelic attributed to St Patrick (372-466)
translated by Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895)
Tune CP 203 St Patrick melody from the Petrie collection of Irish Music (1903)
edited by Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)*

Prayers at the Preparation of the Table

The president says,

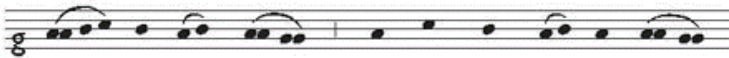
Lord of all and source of our joy,
receive our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.
Keep us in the love of Christ
and bring us to the vision of his glory;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Eucharistic Prayer

The president chants the Eucharistic prayer:



The Lord be with you *R.* and al-so with you.



Lift up your hearts. *R.* **We lift them to the Lord.**



Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



R. **It is right to give thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
For he is our great high priest
who has entered once for all
into the heavenly sanctuary,
evermore to pour upon your Church
the grace and comfort of your Holy Spirit.

He is the one who has gone before us,
who calls us to be united in prayer
as were his disciples in the upper room
while they awaited his promised gift,
the life-giving Spirit of Pentecost.
Therefore all creation yearns with eager longing
as angels and archangels sing the endless hymn of praise:

The choir sings:

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt cœli et terra gloria
tua. Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine
Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.

*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of thy
glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most
high.
Blessed is he that cometh in the
name of the Lord. Hosanna in the
highest.*

The president continues,

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command, send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.
On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.
When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice
made once for all upon the cross.
Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

The deacon introduces:



Praise to you, Lord Je-sus:



Dy-ing you des-troyed our death, ris-ing you re-stored our life:



Lord Je-sus, come in glo-ry.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.
Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with Mary, Michael and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.



Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,



in the unity of the Ho-ly Spi-rit,



all honour and glory are yours, O lov-ing Fa-ther,



for ev-er and ev-er. **A-men.**

The Lord's Prayer

We SIT. The president introduces:

Rejoicing in God's new creation, as our Saviour taught us,
so we pray:

**Vater unser im Himmel,
Geheiligt werde dein Name.
Dein Reich komme.
Dein Wille geschehe,
wie im Himmel, so auf Erden.
Unser tägliches Brot gib uns
heute,
und vergib uns unsere Schuld,
wie auch wir vergeben unseren
Schuldigern.
Und führe uns nicht in
Versuchung,
sondern erlöse uns von dem
Bösen.
Denn dein ist das Reich
und die Kraft und die Herrlichkeit,
in Ewigkeit.
Amen.**

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily
bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who
sin against us.
Lead us not into
temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the
power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread

The president breaks the consecrated bread.

Lord, we died with you on the cross.
Now we are raised to new life.

We were buried in your tomb.
Now we share in your resurrection.

Live in us,
that we may live in you.

The Invitation to Communion

The president says,

Alleluia! Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:
Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia!

Agnus Dei

The choir sings as the ministers and servers receive Communion.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata
mundi, miserere nobis.

*O Lamb of God, that takest away the
sins of the world, have mercy upon us.*

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata
mundi, miserere nobis.

*O Lamb of God, that takest away the
sins of the world, have mercy upon us.*

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata
mundi, dona nobis pacem.

*O Lamb of God, that takest away the
sins of the world, grant us thy peace.*

The Giving of Communion

The ministers and the people receive Communion. All are welcome to receive the sacrament. If you would prefer to receive a blessing, please bring this booklet with you as an indication of your preference. Please follow the directions of the stewards. If you would like a gluten free wafer, please ask and we will be happy to accommodate. During the distribution, the anthem and hymn may be sung.

Anthem

God be in my head and in my understanding.
God be in mine eyes and in my looking.
God be in my mouth and in my speaking.
God be in my heart and in my thinking.
God be at mine end and at my departing.

*Words from the Sarum Primer (1558)
Music by Henry Walford Davies (1869-1941)*

Hymn

**Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain,
wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:**

*Love is come again,
like wheat that springeth green.*

**In the grave they laid him, Love whom we had slain,
thinking that never he would wake again,
laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:**

**Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,
he that for three days in the grave had lain,
quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen:**

**When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
thy touch can call us back to life again,
fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:**

*Words by J.M.C. Crum (1872-1958)
Tune CP 153 Noel Nouvelet Old French Melody
harmonized by Martin Shaw (1875-1958)*

The Prayers after Communion

The president says the Post-Communion prayer for the day, saying

God of all grace,
we thank you that in this sacrament
you have fed us with the bread of heaven
and renewed us in the life of Christ.

We give you thanks for all that has been shared in this place:
for faith deepened, hope rekindled,
friendships formed, wounds tended,
and glimpses of your kingdom made known among us.

As we go from your table,
send us forward with thankful hearts and open hands,
ready to serve you in the places to which you call us,
trusting that your Spirit is always making all things new;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The president leads us in saying

**Father of all,
we give you thanks and praise,
that when we were still far off
you met us in your Son and brought us home.
Dying and living, he declared your love,
gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.
May we who share Christ's body live his risen life;
we who drink his cup bring life to others;
we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.
Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us,
so we and all your children shall be free,
and the whole earth live to praise your name;
through Christ our Lord.**

Amen.

The Dismissal

The Blessing

We STAND as the president says,

Life is short,
and we do not have too much time
to gladden the hearts of those who travel the way with us.
So be swift to love,
make haste to be kind,
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Hymn

We remain *STANDING* to sing as the procession of ministers moves towards the West Screen. Please *TURN* to face the cross as it passes.

**Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.**

**Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.**

**Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy grace receive,
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above;
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.**

**Finish then thy new creation:
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee;
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.**

Words by Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Tune CP 516ii Blaenwern W.P. Rowlands (1860-1937)

The Dismissal

Dean John dismisses the congregation for the last time, saying,

Waiting expectantly for the promised Holy Spirit,
go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Matthew, Yoneng and Jemima Hart, the newest family to join the cathedral congregation, present Dean John with a candle, lit from the Easter candle, saying

Dean John, receive this candle as a sign of our gratitude for
your ministry among us,
and for the light you have carried in this place.

May this light remind you of the calling we have shared:
to be bearers of Christ's peace and reconciliation,
and witnesses to hope in a wounded world.

As you begin this new chapter,
may the light of Christ continue to guide your path,
warm your home,
and shine before you in all that lies ahead.

Go with our love, our prayers, and our thanksgiving.

Dean John replies:

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Congregation applauds as a sign of appreciation for Dean John's ministry.

The Voluntary

Finale from Symphony No. 5 - Widor

Played by Liam Condon, Assistant Director of Music

Please stay after the service and enjoy refreshments and fellowship, along with a guest appearance of Imagineer's 6-metre giant Lady Godiva, in University Square.

The cover image is Dean John's official portrait by Andy Farr.

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